THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to reduce sugar stock, the Government has reduced the levy sugar obligation of the factories from 15% to 10% *w.e.f.* 1.3.2002. Besides, to reduce the sugar stock held by the factories, the following steps have been taken by the Central Government.

(i) Levy exemption has been given on the quantity of sugar exported.

(ii) The quantity of sugar exported is treated as advance free sale release and is adjusted after a period of 18 months from the date of release.

(iii) Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) @5% value of F.O.B. price of sugar has been allowed.

(iv) Quantitative ceiling on export of sugar has been removed.

(v) Advance of freesale sugar is made under the prescribed guidelines subject to adjustment and 5% levy obligations to needy sugar mills to enable them to clear cane price dues of the farmers and to reduce their stocks. Besides, the factories have been allowed to sell upto 10% of their quarterly quota over and above their normal quota to clear their cane price dues.

(vi) A quantity of 1,62,631 MTs, out of 2000-2001 season of unlifted levy sugar stocks was permitted as free sale sugar as a measure of temporary relief.

Fetification of Sugar with Vitamin-A

1960. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:
SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that almost half of the population suffers from micronutrient deficiency of Vitamin-A, iron and iodine;

(b) whether impact of fortified sugar on human beings has been tried;

(c) if so, the steps proposed to fortify sugar with vitamin-A to balance the diet as recommended by the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad; and

(d) the strategies evolved to supply such sugar to all including children especially in tribal and backward areas at affordable price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) The National Institute of Nutritions has informed as under:—

The Micronutrient deficiencies such as Vitamin-A deficiency, iron deficiency anemia and iodine deficiency disorders continue to be a public health problem in India. The prevalence of endemic goiter ranges from 10—60% in endemic areas. About 1 to 5% of less than of 5 years children exhibit Bitot spots, an objective sign of vitamin-A deficiency. In contrast, iron deficiency anemia is widely prevalent in the country affecting mainly 80—90% of pregnant women, adolescent girls and young children.

(b) Efficacy of fortified sugar is yet to be tested.

(c) M/s Shirpur SSK Ltd., Shirpur Dhule, Maharashtra have set up a Pilot Plant of one tonne per hour for production of sugar fortified with Vitamin-A with the financial assistance provided by the Government of India from Sugar Development Fund (SDF) and Micronutrient Initiative (MI), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a Public Corporation of the Government of Canada.

(d) The strategies for supply of fortified sugar would depend upon the success of the trials, *i.e.* after evaluation of bio-effect of fortified sugar.